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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001627

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SUBJECT: LTTE TELL NORWEGIANS THEY ARE PREPARED FOR TALKS  
WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS; SRI LANKAN CABINET MEETING TO GSL  
RESPONSE

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr. for reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

11. (C) Summary: Norwegian Special Envoy Hanssen-Bauer briefed Co-Chairs Ambassadors on October 4 that during his October 3 meetings with Thamilselvan, the LTTE had agreed to talks without conditions in Oslo or Switzerland in October. However the LTTE is concerned the GSL may be tempted to press its military advantage and is also concerned the GSL may attempt to humiliate the LTTE delegation again as it transits the Colombo Airport. The Sri Lankan Cabinet is meeting the evening of October 4 to determine a response to the LTTE offer. Presidential advisor Basil Rajapakse told the Ambassador earlier in the day that the GSL would likely to agree to talks as early as October 14. End Summary.

LTTE Agree to Talks Without Conditions But Worry About  
GSL Offensive

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12. (C) Hanssen-Bauer said the LTTE had confirmed that Prabakaran had decided the LTTE would go to talks without conditions in October in Oslo or Switzerland if the GSL prefers the latter. Thamilselvan said the LTTE had read the Co-Chairs' statement carefully and wants to attend talks that lead to a settlement. Hanssen-Bauer welcomed this, but cautioned the LTTE not to expect too much from a first meeting. The LTTE expressed their understanding and agreement. However, the LTTE expressed their concern that the GSL is prepared to take further military action against them, which would not only cause the LTTE to reverse their decision to attend talks, but would induce the LTTE to take their fight to Colombo (a repeat of their earlier threat to Norwegian Amb Brattskar to take their fight to the south). Asked to be more specific about what kind of GSL military action would cause them to reconsider attending talks, the LTTE clarified that they would regard GSL attempts to seize

additional land as an abrogation of the ceasefire. Isolated shooting incidents would not be sufficient to cause them to reconsider. Hanssen-Bauer said the LTTE was at pains to explain they had shown restraint in the recent period since the Co-Chair meeting in Brussels. He said he warned the LTTE that they too had to exercise restraint and that the explosion of a claymore mine in Colombo, for example, would be a serious CFA violation that would likely cause the GSL to rethink its decision to attend talks.

#### Travel Logistics and Other LTTE Concerns and Requests

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¶3. (C) Thamilselvan expressed significant concern that the GSL would attempt to humiliate the LTTE delegation as they transited the Colombo airport going to and from talks. They asked if Norway could find a different way for them to get to Europe. The Norwegians said they could not. The LTTE then requested that the Norwegians make all the transit arrangements and make sure they stick. The Norwegians said they would do their best but noted they do not control what the GSL might do. The LTTE also asked to visit Oslo and Reykjavik after the talks, presumably to give themselves more international visibility. The Norwegians will look into this. Finally the LTTE asked to meet Co-Chair Ambassadors at Colombo Airport before they depart. Co-Chair Ambassadors, except Ambassador, agreed there was precedent for this and noted it might help smooth the transit of the LTTE through the airport. The Ambassador noted that such contact with American officials was not authorized and that he would only recommend an exception in the context of a much more significant sign that the LTTE was sincerely engaging in negotiations and where the carrot of the US joining such a

COLOMBO 00001627 002 OF 002

Co-Chair meeting with the LTTE could induce significant movement by the LTTE on key negotiating positions.

#### Next Step

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¶4. (C) Hanssen-Bauer said he had conveyed the LTTE's readiness to meet unconditionally in October in Oslo or Switzerland to the GSL the evening of October 3. The Sri Lankan Cabinet was scheduled to meet at 1900 Colombo time on October 4 to decide on the GSL response. Ambassador conveyed that Basil Rajapakse had told him the GSL was prepared to meet the LTTE either on October 14 or after October 27. The Norwegians indicated they had heard rumors of the same, but had not received any official communication.

#### Military Commanders Defend Pre-Emptive Action

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¶5. (C) While waiting for the GSL's response today, Hanssen-Bauer took the opportunity to meet with the GSL's senior military commanders. All confirmed they would support a GSL decision to return to peace talks. However, in what was clearly a message that had been coordinated in advance, all three spoke of the GSL's right to engage in pre-emptive military strikes in the event that major movements of personnel or equipment suggested a build-up for military action by the LTTE. Hanssen-Bauer pointed out to all three that nothing in the Cease Fire Agreement prevents forces on either side from moving military forces and equipment. Army Chief of Staff Fonseka told the Norwegians he estimated it would take the LTTE 3-6 months to build their forces back to the point where they could undertake a substantial military offensive against the GSL.

#### Comment

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¶6. (C) The GSL Cabinet meeting is likely to go late into the evening. Asked if the LTTE would accept a start date as early as October 14 as Basil Rajapakse had hinted to the

Ambassador, the Norwegians said the LTTE probably would.  
However the Swiss have asked for 15 days to prepare for talks  
so the Swiss would also have to agree to accelerate their  
preparations.

BLAKE